

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 L-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00
PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 EA-10 /041 W
-----019824 012004Z /42

R 010720Z NOV 77
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO AMEMBASSY KABUL
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 4881
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 11717

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PK, AF
SUBJECT: KHAN ABDUL GHAFAR KAHAN BACK IN THE NEWS

REF: KABUL 8375 (NOTAL)

1. KHAN ABDUL GHAFAR KHAN WAS PREVENTED FROM TRAVELLING TO AFGHANISTAN SEVERAL DAYS AGO BY PAKISTANI AUTHORITIES. HE WAS NOT ARRESTED THEN, NOR IS HE NOW UNDER ARREST.

2. BROUHAHA OVER GHAFAR KHAN'S PLANS TO LEAVE PAKISTAN IS LATEST IN A SERIES OF EVENTS IN WHICH THE FEISTY NONAGENARIAN HAS AMEBARRASSED BOTH THE GOP AND SOME OF HIS FOLLOWERS. AFTER HIS RELEASE FROM DETENTION IN THE PRE-MARTIAL LAW DAYS, GHAFER KHAN WAS PRONE TO GIVE RAMBLING, LENGHTY SPEECHES CRITICIZING HIS "PATHAN BROTHERS" FOR COWARDICE AND EXCORIATING THE BHUTTO GOVERNMENT. HE KEPT THREATENING TO LEAVE PAKISTAN, "BECAUSE THE PATHANS ARE NOT WORTH OF ME".

2. SEVERAL MONTHS AFTER THE MILITARY TAKE-OVER, CHIEF MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR GENERAL ZIA VISITED GHAFAR KHAN AND DISCUSSED POLITICS WITH HIM. AFTER THE MEETING, ZIA DECLARED GHAFAR WAS A "PATRIOT AND A LOYAL PAKISTANI".

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AND GHAFAR HAD SOME NICE WORDS FOR THE CMLA.

4. LATEST INCIDENT WAS CAUSED BY GHAFAR'S DESIRE TO OBTAIN MEDICAL TREATMENT FOR A PAINFUL KNEE. HE HAS ASKED PERMISSION TO VISIT THE PRC FOR ACUPUNCTURE TREATMENT, AND THE GOP, THROUGH ITS EMBASSY IN PEKING, IS SEEKING APPROVAL. GHAFAR BECAME IMPATIENT WITH THE DELAY, AND DECIDED TO GO

TO JALLALABAD, IN AFGHANISTAN, TO OBTAIN TREATMENT FROM A PHYSICIAN WHO HAS TREATED HIM IN THE PAST. HE WAS STOPPED AT THE BORDER BY PAKISTANI OFFICIALS.

5. GHAFAR IS NOW AT A REST HOUSE, NORTH OF PESHAWAR AND MEETS REGULARLY WITH FAMILY, FRIENDS AND MEMBERS OF THE PRESS. HIS MUSINGS ARE FREQUENTLY CARRIED IN THE MEDIA. WE BELIEVE THE GOP IS MAKING A SINCERE EFFORT TO OBTAIN PRC APPROVAL FOR HIS MEDICAL TREATMENT, AND WILL NOT HINDER HIS DEPARTURE ONCE PERMISSION IS RECEIVED. AS ADDRESSEES AWARE, IF GHAFAR WANTED TO CROSS BORDER INTO AFGHANISTAN WITHOUT GOP PERMISSION, HE HAS THE MEANS AND CONTACTS TO DO SO AT ANY TIME.

6. GHAFAR IS GENERALLY A SPENT FORCE IN FRONTIER POLITICS. HIS AGE, AND HIS IDENTIFICATION WITH PRO-CONGRESS ELEMENTS, BOTH PRE AND POST INDEPENDENCE, ARE POLITICAL LIABILITIES AND COULD HARM ATTEMPTS HIS SON (WALI KHAN) MAKES TO GAIN A NATIONAL POLITICAL FOLLOWING IF HE IS, AS GENERALLY EXPECTED, SOON RELEASED FROM DETENTION. CONSTABLE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TRAVEL CONTROLS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 01-Nov-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977ISLAMA11717
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770446-0259
Format: TEL
From: ISLAMABAD
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t197711110/aaaadqkn.tel
Line Count: 83
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 3667350f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 KABUL 8375
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 420320
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: KHAN ABDUL GHAFFAR KAHAN BACK IN THE NEWS
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, PK, AF, (KHAN, KHAN ABDUL GHAFFAR)
To: KABUL
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/3667350f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009